In Memoriam.

JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D.D.

BX
9225
.S83
F7

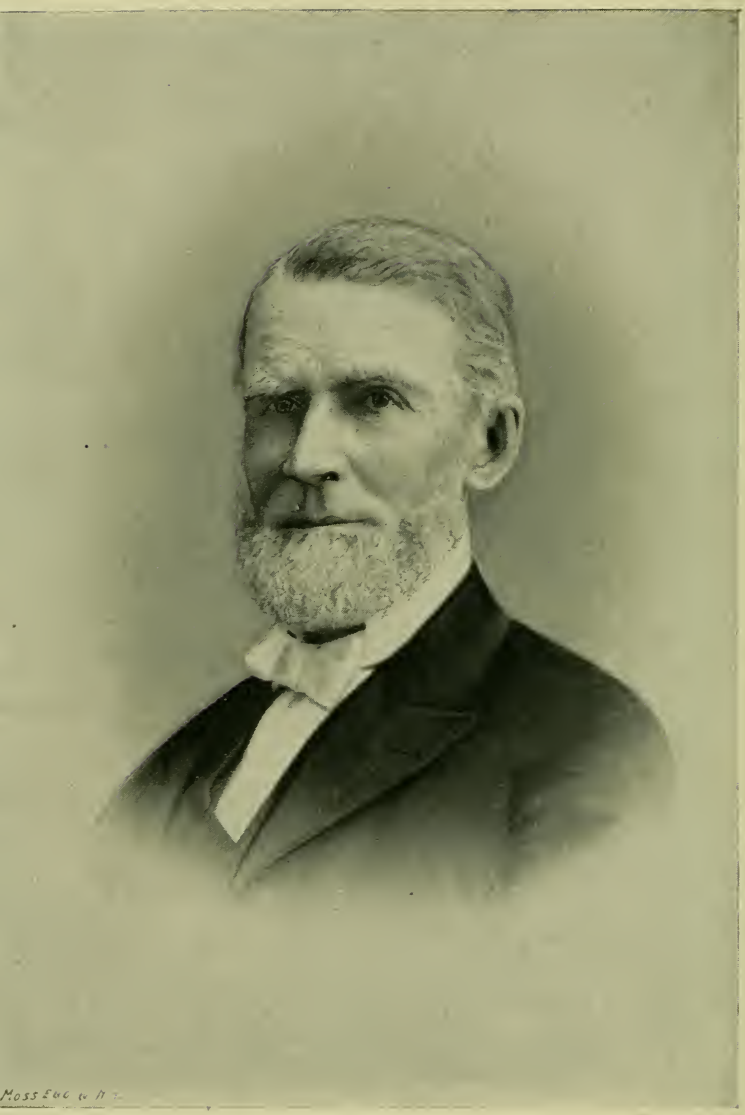
Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented

BX 9225 .S83 F7
Frazer, David R.
Memorial Jonathan F.
Stearns, D.D.

Shelf

Princeton Seal



Memorial.

JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

NEWARK, N. J., DEC. 1ST, 1889,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. DAVID R. FRAZER, D. D.

2D SAMUEL III: 38.

"Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

A Prince indeed, although no crowned sovereign ever placed upon his breast the star or the ribbon which serves as the patent of that nobility which is "of the earth, earthy."

A great man indeed, but his greatness was not after human ideals, it was the outcome of that consecration which seeks the highest glory of God and the highest good of man as the ultimate achievement.

> "That man is great, and he alone,
> Who serves a greatness, not his own,
> For neither praise nor pelf:
> Content to know and be unknown,
> Whole in himself."

Construed by this standard we can truly say, a princely man has fallen in the midst of us, and can profitably devote this hour to the study of the character and the career of our beloved and departed Pastor Emeritus.

There is great danger, in speaking of those whom

we have known and loved and buried, of transgressing the bounds of a sober judgment and of transforming the simple memorial into the high sounding panegyric. Than this, nothing could be more distasteful to our departed Pastor, hence I shall merely trace some of the more prominent features of his life and leave your own love for the man to supply the many omissions of the speaker.

Jonathan French Stearns was born at Bedford, Mass., on September the fourth, 1808. Although character is a growth, the qualities which underlie character are received by inheritance, hence there is much in every man's life that is directly traceable to his ancestry. In this respect Dr. Stearns was peculiarly favored. He "sprung", as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes in his poem "The School Boy" affirms concerning Dr. Samuel Stearns, formerly Pastor of the Old South Church, Boston, and brother of our Dr. Stearns, he

> "Sprung from a saintly race, that never could,
> From youth to age, be anything but good."

His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather on the paternal side and his grandfather on the maternal

were Ministers of the Gospel, hence the poetic saintliness of descent, which seems to savor of exaggeration, is literally verified by the facts of history.

He was one of thirteen children born to the Rev. Samuel and Abigail French Stearns. Eleven of these reached mature years, four of the sons entered the Gospel Ministry and, at least on one occasion, the eleven children were permitted to sit with their honored parents around the table of the Lord.

When our Dr. Stearns was only six days old, his maternal grandfather, for whom he was named, wrote to his father, as follows:

"Andover, September 10th, 1808.

My Dear Son:

"I cannot find anything I have written upon the Covenant of Redemption as distinct from the Covenant of Grace. Mr. Charnock in the second volume of his works, page 186 and on, has something upon it. But I have no time to extract or to give you the summary. I therefore send you the volume. Whether you will obtain any more satisfaction from it than from Gill, I know not Had I time to hunt I am persuaded I could find more upon it.

"Give my love to my dear daughter and to all the grandchildren, in *particular to Master Stearns the younger*, and to all.

"In too much haste, I am,

Your affectionate father,

Jona French."

In commenting on this, Dr. Austin Scott, his son-in-law, says: "This letter thus passes as it were above his cradle. It shews that the first breaths he drew were of an atmosphere full of theology and a theology which made much of Redemption, of Grace and of the Covenants. Charnock's works, and no doubt the identical volume to which reference is here made, were found among Dr. Stearns' books in the room in which he died. Thus his first breaths and his last were, in some sort, of the same sweet air, giving unity and consistency to his life."

His father was Pastor of the Bedford Congregational Church for thirty-seven years, his only charge. The limited income from this rural parish necessitated the most rigid economy in the uprearing of so large a family, yet the intelligence, the refinement and the religion of that New England parsonage so moulded the character, formed the tastes and fashioned the life of the growing boy that our beloved Pastor made manifest, throughout all his days, the blessed influences of that home in his habits of thought, his forms of speech and his modes of action. So fondly attached was he to the home of his childhood that, in the later years, he was wont to visit Bedford annually, on his summer vacations. In his early boyhood he attended the dis-

trict school of the village and continued to do so until he was sufficiently advanced to enter Phillips Academy, at Andover, where he was fitted for college. While at the Academy, he, in conjunction with Horatio B. Hackett, Ray Palmer and others, organized the Philomathean Society. With a pride, which was alike legitimate and commendable, he boasted that with his own hands he earned the money which paid for his first Latin grammar.

In 1826 he entered Harvard College where he was associated with two of his brothers (his father having sons in that institution for eleven consecutive years) and with others, who, attaining great eminence in after life, were his devoted friends. The Hon. Charles Sumner was, for a part of the course, not only his classmate but also his room-mate. The cordiality with which the distinguished Senator greeted his old college friend on the occasion of a visit to Newark abides among the traditions of the city.

The expenses of his collegiate course were largely met by his own exertions. To secure the necessary funds he taught in the country schools during vacation and was not infrequently compelled to trench somewhat upon term time; he served as private tutor to students needing such help, the most notable among

these to whom he sustained this relation was Amos Lawrence, who cherished a life-long affection for him, and he also assisted Wm. H. Prescott in the preparation of his life of Ferdinand and Isabella by translating Spanish manuscripts for him. In reverting to his college life, he was wont to speak, with a glowing enthusiasm, of "The Nine", a literary society of which he and Charles Sumner were founders. Just prior to his graduation in 1830, he was informed by Josiah Quincy, the President of the College, that he was to have the first place in his class, but, for some reason, that honor was given to another and he was assigned the second position.

His theological studies were pursued partly in Andover Seminary and partly in private study under the direction of his father and his elder brother, William. He was licensed to preach by the Woburn Congregational Association of Mass., in October, 1834, and was ordained and installed Pastor of The First Presbyterian Church of Newburyport, Mass., beneath whose pulpit rests all that is mortal of the immortal Whitefield, on September 16th, 1835, by the Presbytery of Londonderry. During this pastorate, which continued for fourteen years, Dr. Stearns made for himself a well deserved and enviable reputation as a preacher and

became known to the denomination at large by an admirable address made in the General Assembly of 1836, on the occasion of the trial of Rev. Albert Barnes. The high esteem in which the young Pastor was held by his parishioners and neighbors is attested by the fact that he was chosen to deliver the address at the dedication of the Oak Hill Cemetery, on July 21st, 1842, on which occasion he pronounced a finished and classical oration on "The Respect Due the Remains of the Dead." On September 22d, 1844, he celebrated the Ninth Anniversary of his ordination and installment by preaching a sermon on religious obstacles and encouragements, from Deuteronomy, first chapter and twenty-first verse: "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it as the Lord God of thy Fathers hath said unto thee: fear not, neither be discouraged." This sermon, which his people very properly deemed worthy of a longer life and a wider dissemination than could be secured by a simple proclamation from the sacred desk, was printed and evinces the same thoroughness of analysis, clearness of statement, soundness of judgment and refinement of taste which characterizes his later efforts. It closes with this personal reference: "Nine years have passed away since I was set apart to labor among you in the

Gospel Ministry. Respecting the past I cannot but thank you for the kindness you have manifested to me, both in sickness and in health, both in prosperity and in sorrow. Forgive me, I fervently beseech you, whatever has been faulty in my conduct towards you. If I have ever unconsciously wounded your sensibilities, if I have ever manifested too little sympathy in your afflictions and infirmities, if I have ever neglected your immortal interests may God forgive me as I now heartily ask your forgiveness. In respect to the future, God only knows what is before us, and God grant that, as long as we live together, no root of bitterness may spring up to trouble us." That this prayer was answered is clearly disclosed by the fact that twenty-one years after his relation to the church had ended, he was invited to deliver the address at the centennial commemoration of the death of George Whitefield, which duty he discharged, with credit to himself and satisfaction to his hearers, on September 30th, 1870. The warm attachment and heartfelt devotion of the people of his first charge were aptly expressed, not only in the touching tribute of respect paid him in the resolutions of the Session, but also in that significant memorial service which was held on November 21st. Eighty-one strokes of the bell, indicative of the age of

Dr. Stearns, summoned the people to the sanctuary, which was appropriately draped. On the front of the pulpit stood a portrait of Dr. Stearns, and beneath the picture a large floral volume bearing, in immortelles, upon its open pages the sentence, "At rest with God." An original poem, written by Mrs. A. E. Porter, an old parishioner, was read; the Rev. D. B. Sinclair, Pastor of the church, preached from Revelations 14: 13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"; a tribute to his memory was paid by Rev. Dr. Fiske, the Pastor of the Congregational Church, to whom Dr. Stearns gave the right hand of fellowship on the occasion of his installment; a tender letter from Rev. John Pike, D. D., was read, as also another from Rev. Dr. Vermilye, who was the immediate successor of Dr. Stearns in the Newburyport pulpit. Since such a service is very extraordinary there must have been something more than ordinary about a relation whose fragrance thus survives the lapse and separation of forty years.

During his residence at Newburyport Dr. Stearns became quite noted as a lyceum lecturer, and it was on one of his lecturing tours, in the year 1843, that he met, in the city of Portland, Me., the elect lady who was the joy of his life and to whom he was married in a few months after introduction.

On the twenty-second of February, 1848, the pulpit of this church was vacated by the retirement of the Rev. Ansel D. Eddy, D. D. Acting upon information received from two separate and distinct sources the attention of this people was directed towards the successful Pastor at Newburyport. After a careful study of his record, the Session called a meeting of the male members of this church and congregation, which was held in the lecture room on Tuesday, July 31st, 1849, at two o'clock, P. M., the Rev. Mr. Bradley presiding and opening with prayer, Dr. L. A. Smith and Joseph N. Tuttle acting as secretaries. I quote from the minutes of the meeting: "Several statements having been made in respect to the ministerial qualifications of the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, of Newburyport, Mass., it was thereupon proposed that a committee be appointed with a view of hearing him preach and to make a report at a future meeting of the congregation, which proposition was negatived, *nem. con.* It was thereupon resolved that the meeting is now prepared to proceed to the selection and call of a Pastor. A proposition to proceed to balloting was unanimously acquiesced in and the Secretaries were appointed Tellers. The Tellers, having collected and counted the ballots, reported to the meeting that fifty ballots had been

cast, of which forty-nine were in favor of the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns and one was blank. It was then unanimously resolved that a call be made out to Mr. Stearns, and that, in case of his acceptance, the congregation agree to pay him a salary of sixteen hundred dollars, in quarterly payments, and to provide him with a suitable parsonage. The following persons were appointed a select committee to subscribe said call, viz.: Isaac Nichols, John Taylor, Uzal J. Tuttle, Isaac Baldwin, P. H. Porter, Demas Colton, Jr., and Wm. K. McDonald. A special committee, consisting of Dr. S. H. Pennington, Dr. L. A. Smith and Mr. John Taylor, (Messrs. Joseph A. Halsey and Joseph N. Tuttle, alternates) was appointed to present in person the said call to the Pastor elect and to prosecute the same before Presbytery." From this official record we learn that Dr. Stearns received a unanimous call to the pastorate of this church without a single member of the committee, the church or the congregation having ever heard him preach, and this church made no mistake in so doing.

Responsive to this unique invitation Dr. Stearns spent a Sabbath in Newark, studying the field and preaching to the congregation, when being favorably impressed, he signified his purpose to accept the call.

That the way was being prepared for the advent of the new Pastor appears from the Trustees' records under date of October 19th, 1849. "The Session and Trustees having, at a joint meeting, recommended that the salary of the Pastor elect take effect from the first day of August last, (that being about the period he received the call) it was resolved that the Treasurer pay him his salary agreeable to the recommendation." The Treasurer was also authorized to pay the Rev. Mr. McIlvaine, who had served as stated supply, "for his ministerial labors in the church and congregation from the 28th day of January last to the 22d instant." October 22d was Monday, and on the following Sabbath, October 28th, 1849, in the full prime of his manhood and the maturity of his powers, Dr. Stearns began his work in this church. On December 13th, 1849, he was duly installed as Pastor, by the Presbytery of Newark, being the fourteenth in the line of able, honored and godly men who had served in that capacity. On this occasion, the Rev. Mr. Gallagher, of Orange, presided and propounded the constitutional questions; the Rev. Dr. Henry B. Smith, then Professor in Amherst College, preached the sermon from Colossians 2 : 9, "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily"; the charge to the Pastor was given by the Rev. Dr.

Brinsmade of the Third Church; the charge to the people by the Rev. D. G. Sprague of South Orange; the prayer of installment was offered by the Rev. Dr. Eddy and the services were closed by the benediction from the new Pastor. The relation thus auspiciously established continued for a whole generation, the work being interrupted only by three visits to Europe. In 1854, while the church was being renovated, Dr. Stearns and his wife were abroad for six months; in 1859 he was absent for three and in 1874 for four months. The duration of the relation is very easily computed, but the results of the relation will never be perfectly known until the seals of God's book are broken. Of results we may not attempt to speak in detail. Suffice it to say that Dr. Stearns received twelve hundred and sixteen souls into the communion of this church during his pastorate; of these, three hundred and eighty-two united on certificate and eight hundred and thirty-four on profession of faith in Christ.

In January, 1851, after Dr. Stearns had been settled but little over a year, he delivered four historical sermons, and out of them came that which has proved to be the great literary work of his life, namely, his history of "the First Church in Newark." He

tells us that it was his intention to prepare "a single practical discourse, founded on a slight glance at the history of the congregation, the early part of which he then supposed had been traced with sufficient minuteness and accuracy by another hand." The suggestion of the proposed sermon came from the fact "that the beginning of the present year completed one-half a century since the history of this church was last traced in a century discourse by the venerable MacWhorter, and just sixty since the house where we are now assembled was first opened for public worship. Such an occasion I am unwilling to let slip, without at least reminding you that there is a Past to be reviewed with interest and gratitude." When he entered upon his proposed work he found "the materials so grew upon his hands that he was insensibly led to extend his narrative to the space of four pulpit discourses." Responsive to a general demand for their publication, Dr. Stearns rewrote his sermons, adding much new material "which seemed hardly suitable to the dignity and sacredness of the pulpit." He felt also, in sending them forth in this permanent form that it was "necessary to pay more regard to completeness and accuracy than had entered into the original plan," hence, while discharging all the ordinary duties of his pastorate, he

toiled conscientiously at this work, through 1851, '52 and '53, up to the issuance of the volume from the press. He tells us that "the labor incident to such inquiries no one knows who has not tried the experiment. The materials must be collected from the widest spaces and wrought into true connection with each other by the most careful consideration of times and circumstances. The determination of a date may often require to be pursued through volumes, pamphlets, records and obscure manuscripts, the examination of which will cost days of toil, and access to them to be obtained only by the tardy process of correspondence, or by visiting in person remote places. And after all perhaps, the result is one which the ordinary reader will either not notice, or regard as a mere matter of course." Long, hard and well did he work, and as the outcome of his labors we have an accurate history of the founding and development of the Church and the City, a history which is recognized as an authority and is the source whence all subsequent writers have drawn their material. By this great work Dr. Stearns laid this Church and this City under obligations which can never be met. For this great work, the Church and the City can never be sufficiently grateful, and through this great work, though he had left

nothing else behind him, he will live in a deathless memory.

In 1850 he was made a Director in Union Theological Seminary, and for many years served this school of the Prophets faithfully and effectively. His personal influence with the men was a potent factor in the movement which secured Henry B. Smith and Roswell D. Hitchcock for their respective chairs in the institution. Indeed it is a curious feature in the history of Dr. Stearns that he was a beloved member of two distinguished triumvirates, both of them centering about Union Theological Seminary. The first group embraced Dr. Stearns, Dr. Henry B. Smith and Dr. George L. Prentiss, although the intimacy of the three friends began long before either of them sustained any official relation to the Seminary. The closeness of their friendship is set forth in a playful letter, written by Dr. Smith from Vevay, while he and Dr. Prentiss were abroad.

"My Dear Stearns:—You cannot imagine how much George and I pity you, forced as you are to fight the battles of the Church in the midst of these summer heats, while we are inhaling long draughts of health and Alpine air. Keep me, my dear friend, in your thoughts and prayers and may God bless you."

In 1847, while Dr. Stearns was yet in Newburyport, Dr. Smith having been called from his pastorate at West Amesbury to the Amherst professorship wrote

"Dr. Stearns:—It pains me to go so far away from you, but we shall yet meet, and often I trust, and always in friendship"

While considering his call to Union Seminary, before giving his official response, he wrote to Dr. Stearns, then a Director in the institution, as follows:

"My Dear Stearns:—Yours is received, thanks for it, its kindness, its partiality and its wisdom. I have about come to a conclusion, which is, I must go to New York. I shall need great indulgence but I know you will give it me."

He came, wrought grandly for the Seminary and the Church, and then, when sick unto death, he wrote once more to his friend.

"Stearns:—I have to go off, I am worn and wearied, taking life hardly and often wishing for death, but I want you to know how much I love you and honor you; what profound esteem I had for your wife and how much I feel for you in your loneliness; how much I thank you for all you have been to me and have done for me, much more than you will ever fully know."

The second group was made up of three Newark Pastors who were also Directors in the Seminary. Concerning them, Dr. Prentiss in his History of Union Theological Seminary says: "The death of Dr. Wilson renders vacant the last of three seats in the Board of Directors which had been occupied for one-third of a century by a remarkable triumvirate of Newark Pastors, the first two of whom were JONATHAN F. STEARNS, elected in 1850, and Joseph Fewsmith, elected in 1852. They were three in varied graces and individuality of character and work, but they were one and of one heart and mind, in striving together so long, side by side, for the faith and furtherance of the Gospel. The very sight of them, as they used to take their places together so promptly at the meeting of the Board of Directors of Union Seminary, was a benediction."

In 1850 the honorary title of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon DR. STEARNS by the College of New Jersey and in 1864 he was made a trustee of that institution. Although his family had been so long connected with, and he himself a graduate of high standing from Harvard College, he gave his best counsels and hearty service to Princeton, evincing his un-

questioned loyalty by educating both of his sons at the Jersey College.

The German Theological Seminary at Bloomfield owes its being to Dr. Stearns and Dr. Poor. For many years Dr. Stearns was President of its Board of Directors and never ceased to feel and manifest the largest interest in its work and prosperity.

Dr. Stearns began his pastorate here at a time when the rival rallying cries of Old and New School were too well known and were too frequently heard in the Church. As the new Pastor was, in some points, in sympathy with Old School views while the Church was in New School connection, considerable interest was felt, in some quarters, as to his probable course under these conditions. But both Old School and New soon learned that Dr. Stearns was no ecclesiastical partisan ; that he was a peacemaker rather than a polemic ; that his work was constructive, not destructive, hence he was peculiarly fitted to be one of the most influential actors in securing the reunion of the two bodies. Long before this topic became a theme of public discussion, he sought to rid the New School of certain "entangling alliances" which brought that

body into disrepute with the Old. He was influential in the establishment, and for many years was a member, of the Home Mission Committee, helping, by his wise counsels, to shape that policy which saved to Presbyterianism many churches which otherwise would have sought a different ecclesiastical connection. His sermon on "Justification by Faith", preached before the Synod of New York and New Jersey, at Poughkeepsie, on October 25th, 1852, did much to allay the suspicions of the Old School body as to the theological soundness of the New. He was an influential member of the New School Committee on reunion, and when the inner history of that movement shall be given to the world the record will show that no one man did more of the real, telling work which secured the desired result than did Dr. Stearns. In recognition of his own deserts and of his faithful labors on behalf of reunion, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly which met in Harrisburg, Pa., in 1868. On May 20th Dr. Henry B. Smith in a letter to his wife says: "Stearns was elected Moderator by a large majority and made a first-rate speech." Again, on May 27th, Dr. Smith writes his wife: "Stearns is doing exceedingly well (tell his wife) as Moderator." As the retiring Moderator, in May, 1869, at the Church of

the Covenant, in New York, Dr. Stearns preached the sermon from the text, John 17: 21, "That they all may be one." The great topic of the hour was the reunion of the two assemblies. In the course of his sermon, Dr. Stearns gave expression to a sentiment which was not only timely when he uttered it, but is full of striking significance at this hour, in view of the present posture of affairs in the Church. After noting the substantial identity of the two bodies, he considered the claim for liberty in the proposed consolidation by asking: "What liberty? Liberty to subscribe to one thing and believe another? Liberty to think and speak contrary to the Scriptures? Do we require other or greater liberty than that secured to us by the words of our Standards? Presbyterianism does not require us to receive the Confession of Faith as infallible. It does not tie us up to those precise words or forms of expression. It does not require us to subscribe to every proposition contained in it, but only to receive it as containing, according to its true intent and original meaning, the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. Calvinism is not that iron thing that some have supposed it. None of us take it as such. None of us preach it as such. We mean to have all reasonable liberty, but in the union or out of it, we mean

to maintain and teach the doctrine of the Confession."

After the reunion had been effected, the difficult and delicate task of negotiating the separation of the New School missionary work from its connection with the American Board of Foreign Missions, and the transfer of its missionaries to the control of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, was largely entrusted to Dr. Stearns, long a corporate member of the American Board, and so satisfactorily did he discharge the duty that no word of complaint was uttered by either party.

During the dark days of the Civil Strife, Dr. Stearns occupied no equivocal position and his pulpit gave forth no uncertain sound. Many of you recall that impassioned, open air appeal when the flag of the Nation was unfurled from the spire of this church. Thoroughly loyal himself, he boldly proclaimed the imperative duty of sacrificing everything, if needs be, in support of the government. "If ever there was a sacred cause on earth, we believe this one is. It is just the cause for which the New Testament explicitly commands the unsheathing of the sword in God's name. It is said we cannot carry it through. We reply, we did not take that question into the account

when we entered on this struggle. It was a plain duty to undertake it, it was a case of life and death to the nation and we *must* struggle until the power to do so no longer remains."

February 9th, 1862, was a very dark day in our National history. Great Britain was indignant over the Trent matter and France was represented as being fully resolved on interference in our affairs, yet in that darkest hour Dr. Stearns said: "Many a noble cause has gone through worse embarrassments and we can go through worse. As yet, the struggle has but grazed the surface of our strength and means. If needs be we must plough a deeper furrow to reach the hard subsoil of our self-devotion. * * * * I would not fear, in such a case, England and France combined. They might sorely afflict, but could not crush us. * * * * We *must* do our duty. We *must* restore in every state and corner of the land that rightful authority which is the bulwark of their peace and happiness as well as ours. We *must* strike down, in the name of truth and righteousness, the hideous demon of rebellion, in whose shout of victory the appalled nations would hear the knell of freedom and the dying groans of crushed philanthropy. This, by the help of God, cost what it may, we will do."

While busily engaged in pastoral work and in the wider work of the Presbyterian Church and institutions, he was not unmindful of the needs of our rapidly growing City. The records of Presbytery and the organization of Bethany Church give practical expression to his interest in and zeal for City Church extension.

Into the sanctity of the home circle we may not intrude, yet any sketch of Dr. Stearns' life would be fatally incomplete which did not take into consideration the invaluable aid given him by his devoted wife. Anna Prentiss was the sister of Dr. George L. Prentiss, Professor in Union Theological Seminary, and of the late Seargent S. Prentiss of Mississippi, whose reputation as an orator still survives. Her early life was passed in that brilliant society for which the South was so famed before the war until she reached her twenty-fifth year, when, marrying Dr. Stearns, she gave herself up to his work with an untiring zeal and devotion which probably helped to shorten her own life. She was "a woman of rare personal attractions, of exceptional social qualities, of warm and sympathizing heart and of devoted piety." Her strength of character, her clearness of judgment and her practical ability not only made her a power in social and religious

circles, but especially fitted her to be a helpmeet to her husband who was often hindered in his work by periodical sick headaches which so disabled him for a season, that he would have resigned his pastoral charge and sought some less laborious position had it not been for the encouragement, the sympathy and the support which he received from his wife. She made the old Mulberry Street parsonage radiant by her presence and the light of his life went out, when on January 2d, 1869, God took the wife of the Pastor to Himself. Her work in this church and her worth are still held in a loving appreciation, and it is eminently appropriate that the ladies of our church should perpetuate the memory of that work and worth, by giving, as they have given, her name to their missionary band.

But the longest and most useful life must come to an end. Even to those most unwilling to admit the fact, it became painfully evident that Dr. Stearns was gradually failing, hence on April 1st, 1882, in view of his increasing infirmities, the congregation released him from the active duties of his pastorate; retained him as Pastor Emeritus, providing for him, as one of his sons appreciatively says, with a "generosity which surrounded my father with every comfort during the in-

firmities of his closing years and did not cease until he was laid away in the grave." On Sunday, February 4th, 1883, he gave me a most cordial welcome to a pulpit made eminent by himself and a long line of worthy predecessors. On February 7th, 1883, Presbytery retired him from his pastorate; approved the action of the church in making him Pastor Emeritus and "Resolved that Presbytery takes this occasion to record its high appreciation of the long and faithful services of the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., as Pastor of the First Church, Newark, now extending, with unblemished reputation and ever increasing honor, over a period of thirty-three years." On February 21st, 1883, he gave the charge to the people at my installation, and ever after it seemed to be his aim to hide himself in order that the eyes of the church might turn *from* that past of which he had so long been the central and honored figure *to* the work of the future in the which he was to have no part. He demitted everything, save a loving interest in the church and its success. Thrice we enjoyed the privilege of his ministrations at the Lord's table. On March 16th, 1884, just prior to his removal to New Brunswick, I constrained him, much against his own inclination, to fill his old place in the pulpit and to preach once more to

his old people. It cost him much to render that service, but I have no hesitation in saying that his sermon from Titus 2 : 15, "Let no man despise thee," was a much more graphic portraiture of the character of the retiring Pastor than is this memorial sermon. We saw him once more in the church after this service. It was on September 25th, 1887, when, although in very poor health, he attended the Centennial Anniversary of the laying of the corner stone of our church edifice, on which occasion he read the Scriptures and pronounced the benediction. The next time he came, we brought him, and we brought him encoffined for the tomb.

After his retirement from active work Dr. Stearns spent much of his time re-reading the Andover and Harvard Greek, preparing his part with all the zest of the ambitious school-boy. But soon the overshadowing fog which had gathered about his faculties grew deeper and darker. He forgot almost everything, yet with all his forgetting he never forgot to be the gentleman. All that deep, ingrained gentility and refinement which was warp and woof in his character; all that was noblest and best in him, his tender courtesy, his true dignity, his genuine self respect he retained to the last. But a few days before my departure for Palestine I

called to see him thinking he might not abide until my return. As a matter of course he did not know who I was; he could not recall, he did not even recognize the picture of the First Church, but when I told him how he had welcomed me as his successor, with all the old time courtesy, he responded, "I am very happy to think I left such a good one." He lost the power of memory, but this was all that he lost. He was not imbecile, his mind was not shattered. He simply forgot everything, and I can conceive no better explanation of the mystery than that which Dr. Craven so tenderly formulated at the funeral service, viz.: that God was merely giving his hard worked servant a little season of rest in the darkness here before he ushered him upon the ceaseless work of praise in the realm of light beyond. Gradually his physical strength waned; four days of unconscious existence here, then on November 11th the fog lifted, and confronting the excellent glory, behold he once more knows, aye, knows even as also he is known.

By the kind permission of his children our Session took full charge of the funeral and served as bearers, every member of that body going to New Brunswick for that purpose. On November 14th, after appropriate services at the house of his son-in-law, Professor

Austin Scott, all that was mortal of Dr. Stearns was brought back to this church, the place of his toils and his triumphs, which had been appropriately draped by our Trustees. The public services were of the simplest character. After Dr. Hart of New Brunswick had offered an invocation, Dr. Findley read the Scriptures, the hymn "Rock of Ages" was sung, the addresses were made by Drs. Craven and Frazer, the Rev. Mr. Hopwood led in prayer, the hymn "Unveil Thy Bosom, Faithful Tomb," was sung and then our Session bore their departed Pastor away and with their own hands they tenderly and reverently laid him in his last resting place at Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

"Lay the weary head to rest
On kind Nature's ample breast;
Fold the hands we used to grasp,
Warm and loving was their clasp.
Sleep, beloved, restful sleep,
Yet forgive us that we weep."

We weep, not on his behalf, but because we have laid away a princely man. Those of us who have known him only in these later days have seen merely the flashes of light which serve as hints of the steady flame that burned so long and so clearly. He was a man of broad culture and would have adorned the

Presidency of Hamilton College or the University of Vermont, to which positions he was most urgently called. Although a Master in theology, his studies were not restricted to the limits of his profession, the well annotated library witnessing alike to a systematic habit and a wide range of study. He kept up his familiarity with the Latin and Greek classics: he had a good, working acquaintance with French and German and had made considerable progress in the knowledge of Spanish. When well advanced in years, to equip himself for the defense of the Gospel against scientific assaults, he mastered the works of the most eminent scientists. He was a great lover of poetry and could readily recite long passages from the most noted English authors, and was so thoroughly conversant with the Word of God that he would occasionally close the book at family worship and repeat a chapter from memory. In the latter years his English Bible, his Greek Testament and Keble's Christian Year were his favorite books. He was a man of remarkably sound judgment, rising above the contagion of popular partiality and being unswayed by the clamor of popular prejudice. He was never in haste to decide, yet he was never indecisive, and when his opinion was formed, he had a reason for it and acted upon it with unwaver-

ing energy and with unswerving steadfastness. To those who met him only publicly and officially he appeared as the reserved, courtly and dignified gentleman. But he was more than this; he was singularly free from assumed stateliness and affectation; while he did nothing from mere impulse as divorced from reflection, his utterances were not weighted down with awful gravity but welled up from the depths of his nature rendered genial by the vein of humor which pervaded it; his confidence was never rashly bestowed, but when given, was given unreservedly, and the tenderness of his affection, the sweetness of his disposition and the cheerfulness of his manner in the home circle cannot be easily overstated.

But above all Dr. Stearns was pre-eminently a man of prayer, his true power being derived from a close, personal communion with God. At the last meeting of K. X. which he attended he offered the closing prayer and his petitions were marked with such peculiar unction and earnestness that he seemed to be talking with God, face to face. At its conclusion, Dr. Fewsmith said, "Was not that wonderful? What does it mean?" "A speedy translation," was my response. But I was wrong, the fiery chariot came not: it was only the man of prayer praying as only the man of prayer can pray.

But now his prayers are ended, his work is done. Reviewing that life work we can honestly and thankfully say,

"He has fought a good fight."

"Worn the breastplate and the helmet,
Worn the panoply and shield;
But his sword no rust has gathered
On Life's weary battle field.
High he held the royal standard,
And the banner of the cross
Never lowered in the conflict,
Never suffered shame or loss."

"He has finished his course."

Never again shall we see that venerable form in this sacred desk. Never again shall we hear his tender tones proclaiming the truth as it is in Jesus. Never again shall his loving hands dispense to us the emblems of the broken body and the shed blood. We shall see him again, but only when this mortal shall have put on immortality.

"He has kept the faith,"

and the faith has so kept him that, after filling a prominent public position in this community for forty years,

he comes down to his grave without a stain upon his character or a spot upon his reputation.

"He has received the crown"

which the Master has laid up for those who are faithful unto death. Life's labors ended, he rests in Christ; his works, speaking in tones of hallowed benediction, do follow him, and although we may not rightly estimate the full value of these works or adequately set forth the worth of his character, we can remember the words which he spake unto us while he was yet present with us, we may imitate the godly example which he has set us, and we will enshrine among our dearest earthly memories the name of Jonathan French Stearns.

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolutions of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, N. J., on the death of the Pastor Emeritus, Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D.

Newark, Nov. 12th, 1889.

Although his venerable age and his long enfeebled condition of health had measurably prepared us for the sad tidings, Session has learned, with sincere and profound sorrow, that on Monday last, November 11th, 1889, the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., departed this life.

Dr. Stearns came to our church in the full maturity of his powers and gave to it the best years of his life, serving as Pastor for thirty-four years, and sustaining the relation of Pastor Emeritus for nearly eight years additional, a term of service unsurpassed, save with one exception, in our long history of two hundred and twenty-two years. Endowed with a naturally clear and strong mind, which was thoroughly trained by careful and conscientious study, he devoted himself with zeal, fidelity and success to his pastoral work in

the midst of us until the infirmities of age compelled him to retire from the position which he had so long adorned. He was a prudent man, a wise counsellor, a sympathetic friend and a loving Pastor. He was amiable in character, courteous in manners, blameless in life and triumphant in death. In a word, Dr. Stearns was an ideal Christian gentleman.

Although his faithful ministrations to us and our delightful intercourse with him will henceforth be only blessed memories, yet these recollections can never die and must prove inspirations for good in the days which are to come.

We commend his bereaved children and children's children to the grace of our covenant keeping God and pray that the Master, whose preciousness the departed Father so fully realised and so ably proclaimed, may comfort them in their sorrow, keep them in his love and finally bring them in the presence of the excellent glory, into an unending association with their glorious and their glorified dead.

This minute to be entered on the records of the Session and a copy sent to the family and the press.

Resolutions of the Presbytery of Newark, December 9th, 1889.

The Presbytery of Newark, having learned with profound sorrow, that the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., departed this life at New Brunswick, on November the eleventh last, records on its Minutes this tribute of affection and respect to one who, for forty years, was an honored, influential and beloved member of our body.

Dr. Stearns came to us in the maturity of his manhood and the fullness of his powers. He discharged the duties of his long pastorate in the First Church, Newark, with credit to himself and to the best interests of that Church. In the wider sphere of our denomination he was recognized as a leader, as an earnest and efficient promoter of many of the most important schemes of church-work, notably the Reunion movement, on which behalf he labored faithfully and efficiently.

He was a courteous gentleman, a wise counsellor, a scholarly minister and an humble servant of the Master.

Having, with marked fidelity and devotion, served his own generation, by the will of God, he has fallen

on Sleep, he rests from his labors, but his works do follow him.

To his stricken children the Presbytery tenders heartfelt and sincere sympathy; congratulates them on their rich legacy of a father's memory and a father's prayers, and commends them to the loving care of that gracious Master, to whom the father, if living, would direct them as a very present help in trouble.

Wm. T. Findley,
Stated Clerk.

The following resolutions were passed at the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Newburyport, Massachusetts :

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Newburyport, Mass., record with profound sorrow the death of Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, the sixth Pastor of the church, who departed this life at New Brunswick, N. J., on Monday, November 11th, 1889.

Resolved, That in this sad dispensation we recognize the great loss which the universal church of Christ has sustained, deprived as it is of a faithful minister, a good man, and an ornament to the Christian profession. We nevertheless feel that the stroke which has removed him from the church militant to the church triumphant, was sent in love to him and us by our Heavenly Father, "for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Therefore we bow in submission to the divine will, praying that the mantle of the departed may rest upon us who remain.

Resolved, That as a church and Session, the death of our beloved Pastor and brother in the Lord calls us to a deeper faith, a closer fellowship with Christ, renewed

efforts to build up his cause in the community, and an earnest preparation for the summons that shall call us from labor on earth to rest in Heaven.

Resolved, That we tender our sympathies to his bereaved children to whom he left the heritage, not only of a good name, but also of a Christian life, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost."

Resolved, That this action be placed upon the records of Session, and communicated to the family of the deceased.

By order of Session,

Brevard D. Sinclair, *Moderator*.

Wm. Bailey, *Clerk*.

Resolutions of Directors of Union Theological Seminary.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of Union Theological Seminary, held March 11th, 1890, the following Minute was adopted by a unanimous vote:

The Board of Directors of Union Theological Seminary, having learned with profound sorrow that the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., departed this life at New Brunswick, N. J., on November 11th, 1889, adopt this Minute as a tribute of respect to his memory.

Dr. Stearns was born at Bedford, Mass., on September 4th, 1808. His preparatory studies were pursued at Phillips Academy, Andover; he was graduated by Harvard College, with high honors, in 1830; he studied Theology, partly at Andover Seminary and partly under the private direction of his father; was licensed to preach October, 1834, by the Woburn Association of Massachusetts, and was ordained and installed Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Newburyport, Mass., on September 16th, 1835, by the Presbytery of Londonderry. After a successful pastorate of fourteen years, he accepted the call of the First Church, Newark, was installed December 13th, 1849, served as Pastor for thirty-four years, when compelled

by the infirmities of age to resign a position which he had long adorned, he was made Pastor Emeritus, and sustained this relation up to the day of his death, a period of seven years, his connection with the church covering almost forty-one years.

And his relation to this Seminary was almost synchronous with that of his relation to the First Church, Newark. In 1850, Dr. Stearns, then in the full maturity of his powers, was elected a member of this Board, devoted himself enthusiastically to the advancement of the best interests of the Seminary, rendered faithful and efficient service for nearly two score years and ended his official relation only when disease made him incompetent to serve. He was one of the prompt, regular and diligent attendants upon the business meetings of the Board. He was a wise counsellor, being singularly free, alike from that abnormal conservatism which refuses to recognise the exigencies of the present and from that excessive radicalism which insists upon repudiating the past, simply because it is past.

By reason of his long and intimate acquaintance with the men, he was able to render and did render distinguished service in securing the invaluable services of Henry B. Smith and Roswell D. Hitchcock to this institution.

He was a man of strong mind, large culture, broad views, warm sympathies and courtly manners. In a word an ideal Christian gentleman.

With gratitude to God that He gave and so long spared Dr. Stearns to us we record this Minute as an expression of the respect which we have long cherished for the man, as an exponent of our high appreciation of the zeal and the fidelity with which for thirty-eight years he discharged the duty of a Director and also as an embodiment of our sympathy for those who mourn a Father beloved, and whom we tenderly commit and commend to the all sufficient grace of the Great and Gracious Father above.

E. M. Kingsley,
Recorder.

Resolutions of the Board of Home Missions.

Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., died November 11th, 1889, in the eighty-second year of his age, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Austin Scott, New Brunswick, N. J. Dr. Stearns was for over thirty years an active Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, N. J., and during the active part of his life held a high position in the church. In 1868 he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (New School) at Pittsburg. He was very active in bringing about the union of the Old and New School branches of the Presbyterian Church, and made one of the principal addresses on that occasion. But during those years he was conspicuously connected with the history and work of Home Missions. He was one of a strong committee appointed by the General Assembly to adjust certain differences of opinion that had arisen between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists with regard to the administration of the affairs of the American Home Missionary Society. The committee was not successful, and in 1855 the General Assembly appointed the Church Extension Committee, of which Dr. Stearns was an active member for six years, when in 1861 the General Assembly

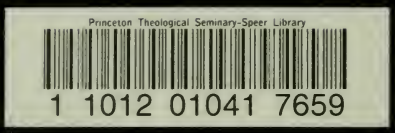
resumed the whole responsibility of conducting the work of Home Missions within its bounds, dissolved the Church Extension Committee as no longer necessary, and constituted the Presbyterian Committee of Home Missions. Of that committee he was a member from the first day of its existence until it was superseded by the organization of the present Board of Home Missions at reunion. Of that Board he was also one of the original members, holding his place then till the growing infirmities of life made it impossible for him to attend its meetings. For fully thirty years from 1855 he had borne a conspicuous part in all matters pertaining to the work of Home Missions. Clear in his judgments, courteous and Christian in all his intercourse with men, he was a most valuable member of the Committee of Home Missions and more lately of the present Board of Home Missions.

This Minute, as above stated, was adopted by the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, at its regular meeting, held December 24th, 1889, and a copy directed to be sent to the family.

JOHN HALL, *President.*

H. KENDALL, } *Corresponding*
WM. IRVIN, } *Secretaries.*

Amzi Pierson & Co.,
Printers and Stationers,
30 *Clinton St.,*
Newark, New Jersey.


Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01041 7659